

1.5 Public Outreach and Scoping Process

Development of the proposed MSHCP involved a substantial amount of public input. Numerous participation activities allowed community and interagency involvement, including the public outreach and scoping processes described below.

1.5.1 Public Outreach

Public involvement is an essential element of preparing a regional HCP such as the proposed MSHCP. To ensure that the proposed MSHCP reflects the priorities and vision of the County's residents, a community-outreach program was a major focus. The County gathered initial community input throughout 1999 with public meetings and surveys asking County residents what they thought their County should look like in 20 years. Several series of forums were put forth to residents of the County throughout 1999 and 2000. In addition, there were hundreds of Advisory Committee meetings to determine the focus of the MSHCP. The Advisory Committee is made up of interested parties and individuals who realize that the future of Riverside County is important. Finally, local biologists were tapped for their input to the MSHCP.

The County also arranged a web site (<http://www.rcip.org>) to serve as an information portal for the public to learn about the status of the MSHCP, upcoming meetings, and to read and/or download documents produced during the planning process.

Residents expressed concerns about the County's ability to retain the rural environment and to attract high-paying jobs. There was a desire to focus growth around current city centers. This initial information was compiled into a "Vision Statement" to guide development of each element of RCIP (MSHCP, the General Plan, and CETAP).

There were numerous workshops, which were open to the public and advertised widely, before the Riverside County Board of Supervisors. Many talks were presented to member City Councils, which were also open to the public. Each City Council and residents of each city were given the opportunity to comment on the formation of the MSHCP, as well as other elements of RCIP. Key policy decisions, after listening to public comments, were made before the Board of Supervisors. Some of the actions before the Board of Supervisors included the following:

- October 1999: The Riverside County Board of Supervisors decided to proceed with development of an MSHCP;
- December 2000: Comments and recommendations by Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) and member Cities were presented in a meeting with Riverside County Board of Supervisors; and
- December 2000: The Advisory Committee issued a list of five recommendations to the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and the RCTC, and Transportation Land Management Agency summarizing Policy Direction for the selection of an MSHCP alternative for further analysis.